MUTINY

FREE PALESZINE!!!

A FORCE MORE POWERFUL.
politics of the
free gaza movement

COCHABAMBA 2010
dispatches from
a different kind of
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RADICAL UNIONISM

IN THE WAKE OF MAY 5
Athens

A PAPER OF
ANARCHISTIC IDEAS
& ACTIONS

ISSUE #51 - JUNE 2010

Editors for this month: Graf Cat, Mambutu Nizwa, Dumpstered Twin, Syzygy, Cynical Smurf, Phoenix

The Mutiny Zine collective does not necessarily agree with all the opinions of contributors. Contributors do not necessarily agree with all the opinions of the Mutiny Zine collective. The Mutiny Zine collective doesn't agree with all the opinions of the Mutiny Zine collective.

Your Bosses are dead Weight

Drop 'em

art by Leo Espinosa

Mutiny is an anarchist collective based in Sydney. We started this zine to explore different avenues of disobedience & resistance, & to encourage people to write about their ideas, actions & experiences.

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News Briefs

Australia

Thousands of angry people filled the streets of Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane after Israeli Occupation Forces hijacked Free Gaza Flotilla boats, killing 9 people, injuring many more, and kidnapping all 700 activists.

An estimated 4000 people turned out in Sydney on 1st June to protest against the Israeli government's attack on the flotilla, burning Israeli flags and chanting "Down down Israel!". The protest was flanked by hundreds of riot police.

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets around the world protesting the attacks; with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against Israel snowballing. Notably, the Pixies, who had previously ignored calls from all over the world to cancel their upcoming Tel Aviv concert, cancelled within days of the attacks.

Canberra

ACTION bus drivers in Canberra are currently engaged in an industrial campaign for a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement that does not reduce hard-won pay and conditions.

Management are trying to force through changes including a below inflation pay offer of 2% per year – an effective pay cut.

Additionally, the ration between full-time and part-time work will be changed towards less secure part-time work. Drivers are already waiting up to four years to become full-time with many choosing to leave because of this long wait. If the proportion of part-time drivers is increased they could be waiting six or more years to become full-time. This is twice as long as it takes to finish some apprenticeships. Management also want to force drivers to work weekend shifts without penalty payment.

The drivers claim is simply to maintain their current level of pay, to maintain the ratio between full-time and part-time jobs, and to have shifts that conform to the national driving standards of a 10 minute break every two hours.

A team of Workers Solidarity Network activists, some local, others from interstate have been active in Canberra for the past several weeks riding the buses and gaining support from the public for the drivers' campaign. The response has been overwhelmingly positive from bus passengers and the general public in support of the drivers' claims.

Management have resorted to a widespread campaign of misinformation about the dispute in the local press using The Canberra Times as a mouthpiece for their anti-worker propaganda.

Villawood, Sydney

9 detainees attempted to escape from Villawood Detention Centre at around 3:30am on Tuesday 25th May. 3 were quickly caught by police, but 6 escaped and are still free in the community. The escapees were not asylum-seekers, but had been jailed in the detention centre for breaching their visa conditions.

This is the third breakout from Villawood since February, with 3 escapees who broke-out in March still not caught.

Another woman was able to escape from immigration detention security guards in Darwin on Thursday 13th May. She was detained upon arrival at Darwin airport for travelling on a fake passport, but then escaped from the motel she was taken to. She is still free.

Brindisi & Gradisca, Italy

2 successful escapes were made this month from inhumane detention centres in Italy. On Friday 21, 36 "extra communitarians" (asylum seekers) managed to make their way onto the roof of the Gradisca facility and jump down the four metre prison wall. Their strength was in numbers for whilst 19 were recaptured 17 were able to disappear into the surrounding countryside shrouded by the darkness of night.

The second successful break from detention happened 9 days later at the Brandisi facility

where immigrants managed to force the gates open from the inside leading to the successful escape of 15 asylum seekers.

Warsaw, Poland

On Sunday 23 May, police raided Nigerian traders at the Stadium bazaar in the Praga district of Warsaw. One man was apparently handcuffed and push to the ground. His 36-year-old colleague from Nigeria, Maxwell Itoya, tried to intervene and to stop the police from brutalising the other. This lead to Itoya being shot in the stomach and his subsequent death.

Police then chased and tried rounding up the rest of the panicked African traders, mostly from Nigeria. When more police arrived, a riot started, where people were throwing stones and bricks at police. Four police vans were destroyed, 32 people were arrested with 25 of them charged with assault. Those charged could face up to 10 years imprisonment.

Contrary to many witnesses at the time, the police allege that they were "surrounded and attacked" by a gang of aggressive Africans, leading to their shooting of Itoya.

Itoya had been in Poland legally for many years, and was selling goods at the stadium to supplement his poor income to support his family.

In the evening, people gathered at the site of the murder. Some speeches were made and then there was a spontaneous demonstration to the police station where people are being held. The protestors took over the main street in Praga to march to the station.

On 30 May, a protest march from the Stadium to the police station was organised by friends of the deceased, the anarchist Association of Polish Syndicalists (ZSP), and a solidarity network. A few hundred people were present, with a large number of migrant participants, in response to the racist police killing.

Seville, Spain

The "granny squatters" threatened with eviction.

In San Bernardo, a neighbourhood near the centre of Seville, elderly tenants were experiencing rising rents and increasing harassment by landlords. The flats were so badly maintained they were living with scaffold poles in the middle of the living room propping up the ceilings. Many tenants talked about wanting to live the few years they had left alive in peace and quiet and in a decent home.

The existence of a new block of council flats, in pristine condition but left empty for three years, came to the attention of the tenants. On the 5th of June 2005 young squatters and supporters gained entry to the building and the ten families moved into the block and took possession. They spent the night huddled in their cardigans in the patio. The next day the police arrived. They pushed and manhandled the frail old people. The street filled up with supporters and tv cameras. The police blockaded people bringing in any food, which got quite serious at one point. The squatters held out and in the end the police left and the squatters stayed. The food blockade was lifted and there was a phase of to-and-fro negotiations with the council when the council made several agreements and then broke them.

Currently four families have been given contracts by the council, one is in negotiations, one has returned to the original flat which has been repaired, and this leaves four households in limbo.

The council is taking two of them to court this month to evict them. The "granny squatters" are seen in Seville as a symbol of struggle and people care about them so there will be a lot of resistance to these evictions.

Strikes, strikes, strikes! Oh what a merry month of May it was for working class action! The following are only a few of the many strikes that happened globally during May. Check out libcom.org for other strike info!

Bangladesh

On 7 May, 150 000 boat workers began an indefinite strike. The strike, called by the Bangladesh River Vessel Workers' Federation (an alliance of six trade unions), emerged primarily because workers had not received a pay increase since 2004, despite rising inflation levels. Workers also had a 22-point list of demands that covered safety issues and checks against corruption. The inland waterways of Bangladesh are a vast complex of rivers and canals and comprise an essential part of the country's transport work - the strike debilitated Bangladesh.

The state repression was overzealous, with strike marchers being attacked and union leaders and activists' homes being raided, and many arrested.

On 16 May, an agreement was signed between government ministers and boat owners and union leaders, which brought an end to the 8 day strike. The deal included the dropping of all criminal charges relating to the strike, the release of all those arrested and an agreement that the demands of the workers would be met in phases.

Romania

On 19 May, 50 000 demonstrators paralysed the Romanian capital of Bucharest. The protest was against the savage austerity measures currently being pursued by the Romanian government. The protest was one of the biggest since the fall of the Ceaușescu government in 1989 and was one of many protests, with people becoming increasingly angry that ordinary Romanians are being forced to pay for the economic crisis.

Romanian trade unions in the public sector are further planning a one-day general strike this month against government plans to cut wages and pensions to comply with a €20 billion IMF-led aid deal.

"We aim to gather around 1 million people in a general strike across Romania the day parliament will discuss the IMF-backed measures," declared Marius Petcu, head of one of the country's largest unions, CNSLR-Fratia.

South Africa

Over 50 000 transport workers in South Africa went on strike on 10 May, due to a wage disagreement. The workers were in dispute with Transnet Ltd., South Africa's largest rail and port operator and freight logistics company. Major South African exports, including fruit, metals and wine have sat idle in warehouses following the walkouts of railway and port workers.

Members of the United Transport and Allied Trade Union returned to work on 22 May after accepting a wage settlement. Members of the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union returned to work on 28 May, also after accepting an 11 percent pay rise and a one-time payment equivalent to 1 percent of their annual salary.

THE WAKE OF MAY 5 :ATHENS

An employee of the burnt bank speaks out on tonight's tragic deaths in Athens

I feel an obligation toward my co-workers who have so unjustly died today to speak out and to say some objective truths. I am sending this message to all media outlets. Anyone who still bares some consciousness should publish it. The rest can continue to play the government's game.

The fire brigade had never issued an operating license to the building in question. The agreement for it to operate was under the table, as it practically happens with all businesses and companies in Greece.

The building in question has no fire safety mechanisms in place, neither planned nor installed ones – that is, it has no ceiling sprinklers, fire exits or fire hoses. There are only some portable fire extinguishers which, of course, cannot help in dealing with extensive fire in a building that is built with long-outdated security standards.

No branch of Marfin bank has had any member of staff trained in dealing with fire, not even in the use of the few fire extinguishers. The management also uses the high costs of such training as a pretext and will not take even the most basic measures to protect its staff.

There has never been a single evacuation exercise in any building by staff members, nor have there been any training sessions by the fire-brigade, to give instructions for situations like this. The only training sessions that have taken place at Marfin Bank concern terrorist action scenarios and specifically planning the escape of the banks' "big heads" from their offices in such a situation.

The building in question had no special accommodation for the case of fire, even though its construction is very sensitive under such circumstances and even though it was filled with materials from floor to ceiling. Materials which are very inflammable, such as paper, plastics, wires & furniture. The building is objectively unsuitable for use as a bank due to its construction.

No member of security has any knowledge of first aid or fire extinguishing, even though they are every time practically charged with securing the building. The bank employees have to turn into firemen or security staff according to the appetite of Mr Vgenopoulos [owner of Marfin Bank].

The management of the bank strictly barred the employees from leaving today, even though they had persistently asked so themselves from very early this morning – while they also forced the employees to lock up the doors and repeatedly confirmed that the building remained locked up throughout the day, over the phone. They even blocked off their internet access so as to prevent the employees from communicating with the outside world.

For many days now there has been some complete terrorisation of the bank's employees in regard to the mobilisations of these days, with the verbal "offer": you either work, or you get fired.

The two undercover police who are dispatched at the branch in question for robbery prevention did not show up today, even though the bank's management had verbally promised to the employees that they would be there.

At last, gentlemen, make your self-criticism and stop wandering around pretending to be shocked. You are responsible for what happened today and in any rightful state (like the ones you like to use from time to time as leading examples on your TV shows) you would have already been arrested for the above actions. My co-workers lost their lives today by malice: the malice of Marfin Bank and Mr. Vgenopoulos personally who explicitly stated that whoever didn't come to work today [May 5th, a day of a general strike!] should not bother showing up for work tomorrow [as they would get fired].

Anarchy is struggle for life, not death

Written by:
Publications-magazine Panoptikon, versions of Foreign editions Ekpiptontes, Exarcheia Standstill, Black Pepper Versions of Evian & Nychtegersia Magazine

In December 2008, during the events that followed the assassination of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, the anarchist/anti-authoritarian movement responded to the fascist pleas of the Mass Media for a return to "quiet, order and security" with the disarming slogan:

"you talk about shop fronts, we talk about human lives".

What dangerous hypocrisy makes some now talk about the non-existing fire extinguishers of the bank rather than the lives that were lost? What Orwellian twist of reality makes some talk about the tragic event as if it was some short-circuit?

Don't we really understand that this hypocrisy is on par with the NATO murderers who spoke of "collateral damage"?

Don't we really understand that the granted and obvious cynicism and thuggery of a mega-capitalist, who blackmailed his employees in being in the bank, does not redeem anyone for the dead?

Don't we really understand that if you use the tactics of the beast you are fighting against, you become one with it?

If anarchists struggle for something, if there is something worth for people to struggle for, this is Life, Freedom and Dignity. For a world where death will no longer hold any authority…

At the demonstration of May 6th in the centre of Thessaloniki, which came as response to the call-out by the union of hospital workers of Thessaloniki and grassroots unions, many people – mostly anarchists and anti-authoritarians from the demonstration's last block – shouted repeatedly: "these were murders, we hold no illusions, the State and Vgenopoulos murder workers". Surely for many such thoughts will be soothing. But do they definitely comprehend the content and the extension of what they are wishing for?

We do not know what exactly happened at Marfin bank on the afternoon of 5/5/2010. What we do know is that at the moment when we heard of the tragic news none of our surrounding was in a position to categorically reject that it was what the attorneys of the Corporate Media had declared it to be. And this is tragic too.

Because if through our practice we do not make it evidently impossible (to us, first and foremost) that such an act would come from people active in the same political space with us then we have already paved the way for tragedies to take place (from murderous irresponsibility, warped nastiness or malice).

In a generalised revolt there are uncontrollable dead; it happened in Los Angeles, it happened in Argentina. No-one ever thought of charging an organised political current with these deaths.

The fact that the three murdered workers of Marfin bank are charged to anarchy certainly reveals some huge responsibilities. Who can ignore the tolerance to avant-guardist logics and the contempt for human life? No matter if you say that the experienced anarchists, all these years, have set alight so many banks and no-one ever was endangered. No matter if you say that it is Vgenopoulos' fault because he forced the employees to stay in the bank, which had no fire protection etc.

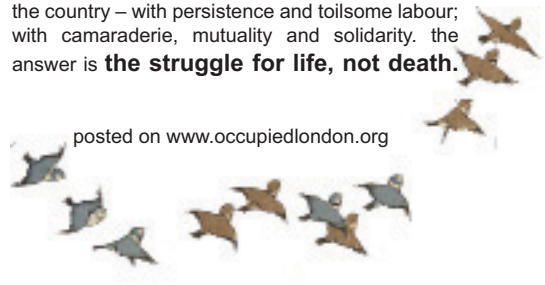
You cannot shake off the responsibility

If there are even some few people who define themselves as anarchists and get to the point of irresponsibility to torch buildings alight with people inside them, this irresponsibility has somehow been cultivated.

If, worse even, you have paved the way for the largest act of agent provocateurs in Greece post-WWII, then the long-term consequences exceed even the tragedy of the three murdered people.

And the answer is not that "the enemy of ruthless". We know of both Piazza Fontana in Milan and Scala in Barcelona.

The answer is the emergent, dense opposition which is growing roots across social spaces, across the country – with persistence and toilsome labour; with camaraderie, mutuality and solidarity. the answer is **the struggle for life, not death.**



posted on www.occupiedlondon.org

A FORCE MORE POWERFUL

by Ewa Jasiewicz

When Israeli Occupation Forces attacked the Free Gaza flotilla on the early morning of June 1st, 2010, it made international headlines. Nine people were killed and dozens more were injured. The following is a discussion of the politics of the Free Gaza Movement.

Later this month, ships from all over the world will converge in the Mediterranean and set sail for the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip. This international coalition is called the Freedom Flotilla.

The Free Gaza Movement has sailed eight missions to Gaza in the past three years, five of them successful. The last three were violently stopped by the Israeli Navy; the boat Dignity was rammed three times and the Spirit of Humanity turned back in January 2009, then seized and all aboard arrested.

This time the Freedom Flotilla is upping the ante and instead of one- and two-vessel challenges, will be breaking Israel's siege with an eight-boat front.

In the past, the Israel Navy could pick us off as individual boats. Now, including Free Gaza's four ships, 700 passengers and some 5,000 tons of reconstruction materials and medical equipment. This includes Free Gaza's MV Rachel Corrie, which was purchased through generous donations from Malaysia's Perdana Global Peace Foundation.

The Israeli government has responded to the "sea intifada" coming its way with saber rattling and accusations of serving Hamas. Israel has proscribed the Turkish human rights and relief group Insani Vardim Vakafi (IHH). IHH is responsible for sending a cargo ship and passenger ship in the Freedom Flotilla. Israel has accused it and Free Gaza of "supporting terrorism." Half the Israeli navy is set to challenge the mission, with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak at the helm commanding the operation in person. The air force is on standby and "diplomatic pressure" is being applied behind the scenes. The message is clear from Israel: "We will stop you and we will use force to stop you."

At no point does the Freedom Flotilla enter Israeli territorial waters. The journey starts in local European or Turkish waters, courses through international waters and ends in Gaza's territorial waters. No checkpoints interrupt us. No walls daunt our sight. We've proven that it's possible to sail a clear line with no borders, as we want the world to be, until we get to Gaza.

Free Gaza is best described as a tactic but in practice, a tactic within a score of tactics active in the global solidarity movement. But it is an expensive one -- and many have criticized the hundreds of thousands of dollars that have been spent on the missions for boats and finding boats, flagging, registration, legal costs, management costs, port fees, crew pay, mooring fees, repairs, renovation, GPS, warehouses for cargo, crane and forklift hire. Collectively the cost of the Flotilla runs literally into the millions of euros. Some ask: "Isn't that money better

spent on 'aid'?"

Every Palestinian family we met in Gaza, particularly after Israel's invasion last winter kept saying to us: "We don't want aid, we need a political solution; we need our rights. Our issue cannot be reduced or swapped into bags of flour or food parcels. Palestine is not a humanitarian issue -- it is a political one." This reality, of the need for justice, tests the aid industry in Palestine, and the false "objectivity" and lack of political will in the face of human suffering with the claim: "We don't take sides. We want to continue to keep giving our humanitarian aid."

Well, we do take sides -- that of direct democracy over occupation and apartheid.

This flotilla is an interruption to a discourse of power that says -- governments know best, leave it to us to negotiate new "freedoms" and realities; a continuation of not even top-down but top-to-top processes of keeping power out of the hands of ordinary people. Leaders fly from continent to continent, round table discussions go round and round, elephants in the room stamp their feet and roar ignored. This flotilla puts that power back into our hands -- to interrupt this ongoing Nakba.

We will not stop. From 1948 until now, history keeps repeating itself, colonies keep expanding, corporations keep reaping the rewards of reproducing repression; daily dispossession and casual killing is normalized, and alienation from the consequences of our work and actions keeps us compartmentalized. The occupation is reproduced on a daily basis in factories, classrooms, courtrooms, cinemas, art galleries, supermarkets and holiday resorts. Radical refusal, radical transgressions can make change happen. Refusing to be alienated from our brothers and sisters and recognizing our community is the essence of solidarity.

This flotilla represents radical solidarity and a force that can be realized when people from all over the world act on their conscience. It's a force made real through stepping out onto the streets or into occupation-supporting businesses, through speaking out, through fundraising in mosques, churches, synagogues, schools; through writing, singing, sharing, relaying and promoting, and packing and driving boxes of materials and cement, and cheering on and praying for and protesting any attack.

Israel may well succeed in stopping us -- but this is an unknown and here is power in that. We can affect that which hasn't happened yet.

When Rachel Corrie stood in front of the bulldozer driver that killed her, she acted on radical trust -- that the soldier would see her humanity. She lost, because the soldier had lost his humanity. Yet Rachel's faith abides in each of us. Because if our oppressors are losing their humanity then we must never stop showing them that we have it. We are undertaking this mission in the spirit of those who have fought and sacrificed their lives for our collective humanity, and to remind everyone who can see of the need to act on it.

Ewa Jasiewicz is a coordinator with the Free Gaza Movement (http://www.freegaza.org/).

This article was previously published on The Electronic Intifada website and republished here with permission.

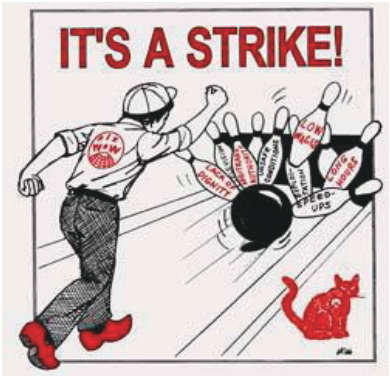
Radical Unionism

by Lindsay Hawkins

In Mutiny #49 Anthony Hayes wrote an article attacking trade unions as a tool of the capitalist class and opposed working class engagement with the unions. In this article I will address some points raised by Anthony and argue that unions have revolutionary potential and that workers should not automatically reject involvement in trade union activity.

Anthony points out that in Greece unions currently dampen down class conflict in the face of an uprising characterised by massive militant protests and riots. This is seen as an example of unions playing their assigned role under capitalism. Other examples are provided and indeed, there is no shortage of historical evidence of unions playing this role.

If by trade unions we mean simply the union bureaucracy then all of Anthony's criticisms and much more beside is undoubtedly true. But a union is not just its bureaucracy nor leadership. A union is composed of the whole membership and also includes its culture and history, its relationship to other social movements and so on.



It is true that union bureaucrats routinely curb militancy and seek to exercise control over worker agitation. But the nature and character of any given union is always open for contestation. There is no formula that predicts how any group of workers organised into a union or any other grouping will respond in a time of upheaval. Unions are potentially are force for revolutionary change as they have been in times past.

Anthony states flatly that unions are not potentially revolutionary, but the history of revolutionary unionism is not a complete void. The Spanish CNT, as a mass based anarcho-syndicalist trade union, played a key role in the anarchist revolution that swept across large parts of Spain in 1936. Similarly, the IWW had a significant impact on the development of the labour movement here and in various other Anglophone countries in the early 20th century. There are other examples of anarchist and revolutionary unions and union movements across Europe, the Americas and Asia that have played an important role in posing an alternative to the conservative and reformist unionism depicted in Anthony's article.

Anthony quotes Marx who offered the following advice to workers in Wages, Price and Profit:

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!" they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wages system!"

These words were in fact included by the IWW (aka the Wobblies) in the well-known preamble to their constitution. There is no question that the Wobblies saw themselves as both unionists and revolutionaries. They organised a parallel organisation to the existing union structure but also worked within existing unions such as the right-wing AWU, agitating for a more militant

and confrontational stand against the bosses. They called this strategy they called dual unionism.

Though they were brutally suppressed, the Wobblies had a lasting impact on the Australian labour movement. Their militant anti-racism and internationalism and their courageous stand against conscription during WWI can be seen echoed decades later in the refusal by waterside workers in Pt Kembla to load ships with pig iron bound for Japan prior to WWII. And later in union struggles for Indonesian independence, the fight against apartheid, the Vietnam War and so on.

The spirit of revolutionary unionism is also evident in the BLF Green Bans of the 1970s. The NSW BLF implemented an agenda of far reaching democratic, rank and file membership control of their union's affairs. Under the control of members, the BLF went beyond the traditional economic concerns of trade unions to encourage workers to question not just the nature of their work but also the fundamental role and composition of their union. A proposal by the NSW Branch Secretary, Jack Mundey, would have changed the rules of the union so that anyone could join the organisation, changing the whole concept of what a trade union is and what it could become. The NSW BLF was deregistered and smashed but for the time that it was active it broke new ground by making connections with the broader community to fight for the environment and low cost housing, indigenous and women's rights, direct democracy and workers control.

Whether or not we allow our unions to be dominated by cynical opportunists and careerists is up to us. The ALP goes to great lengths to maintain control of our unions and suppress the efforts of workers to self-organise. Many workers are dissatisfied with this state of affairs and there are signs that more people are now willing to put the time and energy in to changing it.

Reformist and revolutionary goals need not be counter posed to one another. A revolutionary upheaval resulting in a shift in power to the mass of people in society may happen quickly but it is built up over time; generally what we see is that change leads to more change.

The BLF Green Bans only came about after a decade of fighting for and winning improvements in wages and conditions that inspired rank and file workers to push for greater demands and built great trust with their leadership.

The distinction between reform and revolution breaks down even further in places like Columbia where simply agitating for a toilet break is an act of insurgency; where union organisers are frequently tortured and murdered just fighting for basic rights.

The EZLN have a metaphor for this of 'expanding the floor of the cage' calling theirs "a revolution to make a revolution possible".

Lasting meaningful change in society often takes a long time and a lot of hard work. We need to be willing to put in that hard work if we want our class to be organised and strong enough to break free from capitalist control.

Anthony's article is a litany of wrongdoing by the union establishment. It paints a stark picture and has virtually nothing good to say about unions at all. But Anthony does acknowledge that unions play an important role in winning better wages and conditions

for workers. This reformist role of unions is important for many workers on low incomes working in oppressive conditions who are only just surviving and for whom a $26 per week increase in the minimum wage is a big deal. Hard won improvements in safety standards in mining and construction have also saved workers' lives.

Union officials have frequently played a bad role in suppressing working class organising and curtailing dissent. Most senior union officials are ALP members and most willingly play the role of union cops, policing the working class, repressing independent organising and keeping us isolated and divided. But this scenario is not fixed for all time. Things were not always as bad as they are now and things are changing once again. Rank and file organising is growing and working class resistance is spreading. It may be that in future we will need to break from trade unionism if it demonstrates itself to be wholly reactionary in a time of heightened class conflict, but that is not at all clear at the moment. Our history suggests it is possible once again for radical unions to play a role in opposing the whole system of exploitation and not just confine themselves to struggling for better wages and conditions.

Many workers are turning to unions once again as we reassert our power as a class. Many members are also fed up with the timid, conservative and sell-out unionism that has dominated the industrial landscape for the past several decades. Since the collapse of state socialism the field is wide-open for libertarians to organise and provide a vision that is democratic and avoids the statist distortions of communist ideology in the 20th century. The potential for democratic, membership-controlled unionism is greater now than just about any time in the last century. This would be a positive step towards workers self-management, and the democratic mass control of society by us all.

The Workers Solidarity Network offers a way for radicals and agitators, union militants and the just plain pissed off to work together and be in contact with each other as a source of mutual support and solidarity. How the WSN engages with the unions remains a key point of debate within the group.

Our allegiance is to our class and to each other, but the union bureaucracy has an entirely different agenda. Approaches by union officials should be viewed cautiously but should not be instantly dismissed, as there are some genuine union officials. As independent organising grows, conflict with the union hierarchy will become unavoidable. We should always look to forge links with rank and file unionists and all members of our class as others have done before us. We should also aim to organise as a whole class across the divisions put in place to keep us apart, and together fight for our emancipation globally.

Cochabamba 2010 – dispatches from a different kind of climate confererence

- Kylie

As the Copenhagen climate meeting went down in a mess of strong-arm tactics by U.S. negotiators, frenzied activity on NGO Twitter accounts, and pre-emptive arrests of activists by Danish police, Bolivian President Evo Morales announced plans for another conference. This time, we were told, the voices of the peoples of the world would be front and centre, and the corporate interests driving the UN process would be conspicuously absent. Last month, in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba where I live, more than 30,000 people descended on a private university campus to give life to that proposal.

Cochabamba is familiar for the 'Water War' of 2000, where the city's inhabitants filled the streets under the slogan '*The water is ours, dammit!*' They were responding to a World Bank-backed water privatisation grab by Bechtel, a multinational based in California. Their victory (at the price of one death and massive police repression) in ridding the city of the company was a source of global inspiration. Five years later, Bolivia's increasingly powerful social movements swept Morales and his 'Movement towards Socialism' (MAS) party to power on a tide of anti-neoliberal sentiment and mobilisation. The election was hailed around the world as representing a fundamental change in Bolivian politics – and reflective of wider shifts in Latin America.

Who What Where

The Cochabamba conference implicitly constructed an 'inside' around the interests of those who were systematically forced to the 'outside' of Copenhagen. One example: whereas Nigerian anti-oil activist Nnimmo Bassey was thrown out of the Bella Centre in Copenhagen, he was made an honoured speaker at theCochabamba opening rally.

It was estimated that about two thirds of the participants came from Bolivia, from representatives of social organisations to city residents just passing through. Participants from the 'North' ranged from grassroots activists to NGO workers (albeit representing organisations towards the left of the spectrum.) Northern participants tended to be those who would identify with the 'climate justice' wing of the climate movement. That is, activists strongly concerned with the 'social justice' implications of both the impacts of climate change, and the solutions for it.

The conference was organised around 17 'working groups' which were set up to produce a series of statements that were eventually integrated into a final declaration. These groups were organised under titles like 'Agriculture and Food Sovereignty', 'Technology Transfer' and 'Climate Migrants.' There was also a sprawling program of self-organised workshops on everything from campaigns against specific mining projects, to 'What is Ecosocialism?' There were plenaries of several hundred people with superstar speakers and simultaneous translation, and giant stadium rallies to open and close the event.

Pink Southern governments, Green Northern anti-capitalists

In 2010, the picture in Bolivia is quite different than it was five years ago. Morales has been re-elected in a landslide victory, following the electoral collapse of the right-wing opposition parties. His government has continued to struggle with the challenges of pursuing an agenda of state-led developmentalism without provoking large-scale capital flight by foreign investors. It has also faced the pressures of separatist regionalism; radical social movements that present a wide variety of demands; and a

serious deterioration in the relationship with the U.S. government. Nonetheless, the MAS government has consolidated its popularity, and the country hasn't plunged into the kind of crisis that might have been expected given Bolivia's position in global capitalism. It's easy to see why some anti-capitalists might have a complicated set of responses to Morales and his government. The president is rightly recognised and respected for his long history as an important leader of anti-neoliberal social movements. Also, the relationships between MAS and various social movement sectors are much deeper and stronger than anything we might recognise in parliamentary systems in Australia. The role that Morales has played on the stage of U.N. climate negotiations has undoubtedly amplified and given voice to many claims supported by more radical parts of the climate movement, in powerful and useful ways. There is commonality between climate justice movements and the Bolivian government, however, significant divergences also exist.

The prevailing politics of the opening and closing rallies were unapologetically statist, and militarism was conspicuous: I counted about eight different kinds of police or army units present throughout the conference, ranging from the ranks arranged in ceremonial dress on the parade ground, to the masked, black-clad and armed-with-semi-automatics squad that roared through the conference entrance on motorbikes and open-backed four wheel drives. This is, of course, by no means unique to Bolivia, or to Latin America – we see similar political technology at work all over the world. However, anti-capitalists from other countries (particularly anti-authoritarians) are not used to being allies to those who control the workings of that technology. Similarly, we're not used to working with governments in decision-making spaces; doubtless the involvement of the Bolivian government in the conference working groups was welcomed by some and met with reserve by others.

Another point of tension for many climate activists is that Bolivia's economy, following a colonial and neo-colonial history, remains based on extraction of natural resources, particularly hydrocarbons like oil and natural gas. The Bolivian government is unapologetic about its pro-extraction policies. Social redistribution of revenues from resource exploitation has always been central to the MAS platform. Climate negotiators from the 'global South', including Bolivia, often argue that the right to 'development' trumps the need for Southern countries to slow emissions or extraction. The appearance of Hugo Chavez, the head of one of the world's most significant petro-states, as a guest of honour at the conference was a further reminder of the limits to Morales' environmentalist positioning.

The challenge from within

This piece opened with the idea of the Cochabamba conference making 'insiders' of Copenhagen's 'outsiders'. In the Bolivian foothills, however, there was another 'outside' space. Groups within Bolivia were galvanised by the exclusion of local environmental issues from the conference. Their response was to set up a separate space in a Brazilian restaurant just outside the university grounds, known as 'Mesa [table] 18' (in reference to the official 17 working groups of the conference.) Here, the gap between Morales' pronouncements on the global stage and the policy agenda of his government was thrown into relief.

The discussions at Mesa 18 made it clear that there is there is not unanimous support for Morales' commitment to extraction within

the Bolivian left. Nor is his position as spokesperson for the Indigenous worldview uncontested. Rafael Quispe, one of the leaders of CONAMAQ (a key Indigenous group) put it thus: "The [economic] models that we've known until now are socialism and capitalism, but both are Western, both are extractivist, developmentalist, consumerist and predatory. These models violate the rights of the mother earth, and if President Evo Morales expresses that we are in a socialist model then he is violating the Mother Earth." Conflicts over these themes were highlighted to a keenly observant local and international audience. One such conflict came to a head in the middle of the conference when local communities blockaded the train line into the Japanese-operated San Cristobal mine, to protest its exorbitant water use and contaminating impact.

That said, Mesa 18 was not your typical counter-summit. Many of the participants were present in the main conference, sometimes as featured speakers. The approach of movements to Morales is vastly different from their relationship to previous, openly neoliberal governments. To some extent, such critiques are presented as coming from groups allied with or overlapping with Morales' base, not as coming from a hostile opposition. In another illustrative moment several weeks later, the Central Obrera Boliviana (the main trade union federation) called a national strike to a halt in favour of a deal with the national government. It is possible to interpret these moves by Bolivian movements – whether they be to continue to participate in the government-sponsored summit, or to return to work and strike a deal with the government – as co-optation. But such a view would be too simplistic. Another picture is necessary -one that takes into account the presence of real and vocal dissent; the deep changes in representational politics in the country; the changes in strategy that groups may have chosen to follow; and the genuine hope among many that MAS can and will deliver major transformations.

Building solidarity

The Europe-based network Climate Justice Action formulated the question of 'how to enact international solidarity' in an open letter to the conference as follows: "What does 'solidarity' mean and how can we work together more effectively to build the transnational struggle for climate justice?" There is no one response to this question. But answers have been starting to form around issues like climate migration and the militarization of borders; alliances that fight carbon traders in the global South and the polluters that pay them; and transnational campaigns to force specific corporations to behave differently. Without doubt, these are difficult tasks. But it is not beyond what we are capable of.

Despite the obvious limitations (to use a generous phrase) of the U.N. process, it remains a space where an important discursive game will be played. The People's Agreement of Cochabamba, while inevitably failing to represent a unanimous movement consensus, is an alternative framework to that being pushed by Wall Street financiers and big polluters. It may signal the consolidation of a position within the climate movement that explicitly rejects market solutions. As such, it could represent the growing viability of alternatives to policy frameworks put forward by the Al Gores of this world, alongside conservative environmental NGOs. The value of making space for such alternatives should not be underestimated.

More important than the agreement however, was that Cochabamba provided an arena for people from climate justice movements on several different continents to learn, plan and strategise together, freed from just reacting to a U.N summit. This is what we need to do more of, if we are going to build a global movement that can win.

BLACK ROSE WINTER FILM FESTIVAL

Sunday 20th June - La Commune - 5hrs 40mins (holy shit!)
For the shortest Sunday of the year, Black Rose presents the Peter Watkins epic historical re-enactment of the Paris Commune.
$10 donation - vegan dinner and lots of breaks included!

Sunday 27th June - The Day the Country Died
A documentary tracing the Anarcho-Punk movement of the early 80's. Features interviews, footage and music.
$5 donation
More films & info at blackrosebooks.org

In this issue:

- Ewa Jaciewitz discusses Free Gaza Movement's politics
- What kind of radical potential do unions have?
- International correspondant Kylie gives us the lowdown on the Cochabamba Climate Conference
- Athens reels after bank workers'deaths

Up-Coming Events

Sun 27 June Workers Solidarity Network Meeting: 3pm, at Jura.
Sat 3 July Insepia, Nim, Hira Hira and Pockets Show: 8pm, at Jura
Tues 6 July (A) Book Club: 6pm, at Jura. We're discussing the 'Anarchism in Action' section of the book 'Demanding the Impossible' by Peter Marshall.
Thurs 8 July Encircling sea, Ivens, none remain, ToP, d.o.s Show: 7pm, at Jura
Fri 16 July Penguins, Melodies and Michael Crafter Show: 7pm, at Jura
Sun 18th July: Refugee Anti-deportation Strategising Workshop, 1-5pm, SUPRA (cnr Raglan & Abercrombie Sts, Sydney Uni)